

The Sexual Assault Crisis Service of the YWCA New Britain
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Testimony of Liz Halla-Mattingly, Adult Advocate
In Support of H.B. 6664, AN ACT CONCERNING RESTRAINING ORDERS

To the members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Liz Halla-Mattingly, and I am the Adult Advocate for the Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) of the YWCA New Britain. SACS covers a 46 town region and offers free, confidential services to victims of sexual assault and their loved ones. We provide 24hour English and Spanish confidential hotlines; short-term, individual crisis counseling; a variety of support groups; and accompaniment throughout medical, police, and court procedures. In 2012 SACS served over 700 victims of sexual assault. Based on my work with victims, I would like to testify in support of H.B. 6664, An Act Concerning Restraining Orders.

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2010 Summary Report, 43.2% of female rape victims and 52.4% of male rape victims report being raped by an acquaintance or person of authority and not by an intimate partner or family member. In my experience, these offenders can be friends, neighbors, coworkers, pastors, or classmates, just to name a few. These are people that the victim may see on a regular basis, or who know where the victim lives, works, or goes in their free time. They may be able to contact the victim by phone or online. Fear of encountering one's rapist after an assault can have many consequences, both emotional and physical. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center reports that 81% of women and 35% of men report significant short- or long-term impacts such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Additionally, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey summary report found that men and women victims of certain forms of violence including rape were more likely to report headaches, chronic pain, sleeping difficulty, and poor physical and mental health. And yet, these victims are unable to file JD-FM-137, or Application for Relief from Abuse, against their offenders. Currently this form can only be filed against a family member or current or former intimate partner. Victims are usually surprised to learn this and have a hard time understanding why they are unable to file for a restraining order against someone who has hurt them and that they are afraid may hurt them again. Despite this discrepancy, I have accompanied clients who are filing this form hoping that it would be granted anyways. Unfortunately, the restraining order is most often denied, leaving victims feeling powerless.

H.B. 6664 would ease the requirements associated with the granting of restraining orders and would allow any victim of sexual assault the right to apply for a restraining order against the offender. This would benefit those many victims raped or assaulted by acquaintances. It will help them feel safe at home, at work, at church, or at school. It may ease some of the negative and destructive costs that are associated with the fear of encountering one's rapist or assailant which can contribute to better mental and physical health for victims.

Thank you for your time in considering this legislation. I hope you will join me in supporting H.B 6664.

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